

Docket No.: SOA-330

(PATENT)

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of:

Masahiro Nakano

Application No.: 09/827,950

Filed: April 9, 2001

Art Unit: 2611

For: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR

NOTIFYING USERS OF FILTERED E-MAIL

USING A SET TOP BOX

Examiner: K. O. T. Bui

Confirmation No.: 6685

APPELLANT'S BRIEF

MS Appeal Brief - Patents Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

This is an Appeal Brief under 37 C.F.R. §41.37 appealing the final decision of the Examiner dated August 10, 2005. Each of the topics required by 37 C.F.R. §41.37 is presented herewith and is labeled appropriately.

This brief is in furtherance of the Final Office Action on August 10, 2005.

A Notice of Appeal and one-month extension was filed in this case on December 12, 2005.

Because February 12, 2006, two months after the filing of the Notice of Appeal, falls on a Sunday, the period for response is extended to February 13, 2006, which is the next day that is neither a Saturday, Sunday nor a Federal holiday in the District of Columbia.

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

Sony Corporation of Tokyo, Japan and Sony Electronics, Inc. of Park Ridge, New Jersey (hereinafter collectively "Sony") are the real parties in interest of the present application. An assignment of all rights in the present application to Sony was executed by the inventors and recorded by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office at reel 012617, frame 0298.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no other appeals or interferences which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this appeal.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-18 (Rejected);

Claims 19 (Canceled);

Claims 20-21 (Rejected).

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

Subsequent to the final rejection of August 10, 2005, an Amendment After Final Action (37 C.F.R. Section 1.116) has been filed on October 20, 2005. The Advisory Action of November 15, 2005 indicates that the Amendment of October 20, 2005 would be entered for the purposes of appeal.

No other Amendment has been filed.

Docket No.: SOA-330

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V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The following description is provided for illustrative purposes and is not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

The present invention relates to the field of set top boxes. More particularly, the invention relates to set top boxes working with e-mail servers to provide notification to users of the arrival of selected e-mails.

Disclosed is an apparatus for filtering electronic mail and notifying a user, residing in a set top box (10) connected between a television content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server (40), and a television (12).

In particular, the apparatus includes a software program application (38) which enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria (36) and a notification icon (60) which then retains and stores the e-mail filter criteria (36) and the notification icon (60) (Substitute specification at page 11, line 17 through page 13, line 26). Also found within the apparatus is a querying module contained within the software program application (38) which queries the e-mail server (36) to determine whether e-mail fulfilling the e-mail filter criteria (36) has arrived at the e-mail server (40) and a notifying module contained within the software program application (38), wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling the e-mail filter criteria (36), the software program application (38) notifies the user by posting the notification icon (60) to the set top box (10) (Substitute specification at page 10, lines 14-22, and page 11, line 17 through page 13, line 26).

VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

The issues presented for consideration in this appeal are as follows:

Whether the Examiner erred in rejecting claims 1-4 and 6-21 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,373,817 to Kung et al. (Kung).

Whether the Examiner erred in rejecting claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Kung in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,397,167 to Skinner et al. (Skinner).

These issues will be discussed hereinbelow.

VII. ARGUMENT

In the Final Office Action of August 10, 2005:

The Examiner erred in rejecting claims 1-4 and 6-21 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as allegedly being anticipated by Kung.

The Examiner erred in rejecting claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Kung in view of Skinner.

For at least the following reasons, Appellant submits that these rejections are both technically and legally unsound and should therefore be reversed.

Grouping of claims

Claims 1-18 and 20-21 are currently pending in this application, with claims 1, 20, and 21 being independent. For purposes of the issues presented by this appeal:

Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 10-18 stand or fall together.

Claim 5 stands or falls alone.

Claims 8, 9 stand or fall together.

Claim 19 stands or falls alone.

Claim 20 stands or falls alone.

Claim 21 stands or falls alone.

The arguments set forth in the following section provide reasons why these claims are considered patentable, 37 C.F.R. §41.37(c) (1) (vii).

Advisory Action

The Advisory Action contends that claims 1, 20 and 21 <u>should have been</u> rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

In particular, the Final Office Action contends that the reason was a set top box itself is just a cable decoder, and it does not have a visual screen for posting "notification icons" to the user as repeated claimed an argued by the applicants (Advisory Action at page 2).

In response, <u>no rejection</u> of claims 1, 20 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph has been made within the Final Office Action. If a rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph is intended, practice and procedures within the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office dictate this rejection should occur within the context of a properly stated Office Action. M.P.E.P. §707.07.

Moreover, the claims are believed to be facially clear and are supported by the specification as originally filed. The claim language is unambiguous.

While the claims may be open to a set top box having a visual screen, the claims are not limited to requiring the set top box to include a visual screen.

Such a reconstruction made in the Advisory Action of requiring a set top box of the claimed invention to include a visual screen is merely an attempt to redefine the invention in a manner different than from what is disclosed within the specification and set forth within the claims. Such reconstruction is without authority under Title 35 U.S.C., Title 37 C.F.R., the

M.P.E.P., and relevant case law; such reconstruction is therefore deemed improper. See M.P.E.P. §2164.08.

The Examiner erred in rejecting claims 1-4 and 6-21 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as allegedly being anticipated by Kung.

Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 10-18 - Claim 1 is drawn to an apparatus comprising:

a software program application which enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and said notification icon;

a querying module contained within said software program application which queries said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria has arrived at said e-mail server; and

a notifying module also contained within said software program application,

wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria, said software program application notifies the user by posting said notification icon to the set top box.

This rejection is traversed at least for the following reasons.

Kung - Kung arguably teaches an <u>IP central station 200</u> and a <u>broadband residential</u> <u>gateway 300</u> (Kung at Figure 1).

Kung arguably teaches the <u>IP central station 200</u> as having a <u>multimedia server 222</u> that may be configured to support <u>e-mail</u> (for example, html) messages (Kung at column 13, lines 10-12). Where the multimedia server 222 of Kung provides storage for the multimedia

messages, a database may be utilized for indexing, storage and retrieval of such messages (Kung at column, lines 20-24).

However, the Final Office Action and the Advisory Action fail to highlight with particularity the feature within Kung that is intended to be a querying module contained within a software program application which queries the <u>multimedia server 222</u> to determine whether e-mail fulfilling e-mail filter criteria has arrived at the <u>multimedia server 222</u>.

Thus, the Final Office Action and the Advisory Action fail to show the presence of a querying module contained within the software program application which queries the e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling the e-mail filter criteria has arrived at the e-mail server, as claimed.

Additionally, Kung <u>fails</u> to disclose, teach or suggest a notifying module also contained within the software program application, as claimed.

The Advisory Action appears to identify the <u>broadband residential gateway 300</u> as the set top box found within the claimed invention (Advisory Action at pages 2-3).

Upon review, Kung arguably teaches that the <u>broadband residential gateway 300</u> may be variously configured to provide functionality to one or more TVs (using, for example, either an integrated or separate decoder functionality, for example, <u>set top box 350</u>) (Kung at Figure 3, column 19, lines 9 and 13-15).

However, Kung fails to disclose, teach, or suggest that upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling an e-mail filter criterion, a software program application notifies the user by posting the notification icon to the <u>set top box 350</u>.

Kung arguably teaches that the <u>display 338</u> may include, for example, an <u>interactive</u> <u>LED/LCD</u> module positioned in a suitable location such as within or attached to <u>the broadband</u> <u>residential gateway 300</u> (Kung at Figure 3, column 22, lines 37-39). The <u>display 338</u> may also include touch screen capabilities that allow information to be input via a plurality of interrelated on-screen prompts, <u>on-screen icons</u>, and/or a keypad (for example, an alphanumeric keyboard) (Kung at column 22, lines 52-57). In one embodiment of the <u>display 338</u> operation, a user may

7

touch <u>an icon</u> representing a <u>pending voicemail</u> and/or <u>multimedia mail message</u> (Kung at column 22, lines 58-60). In embodiments where the <u>broadband residential gateway 300</u> supports multiple mailboxes, <u>the icons</u> on the <u>LCD/LED</u> may be personalized to show the identity of the owner of the message (Kung at column 23, lines 23-26).

Nevertheless, Kung <u>fails</u> to disclose, teach or suggest that upon arrival of a <u>multimedia mail message that fulfills a criterion</u>, a software program application <u>notifies the</u> <u>user</u> by posting <u>the icon</u> to the <u>display 338</u>.

Thus, Kung fails to disclose, teach, or suggest that upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling e-mail filter criteria, a software program application notifies the user by posting the notification icon to the set top box, as claimed.

<u>Claims 8, 9</u> - Within claim 8 said software program application further includes means for notifying the user through the use of a tone generated through the television speaker.

This rejection is traversed at least for the reasons provided hereinabove with respect to claim 1, and for the following reasons.

Kung arguably teaches that the broadband residential gateway 300 may be variously configured to, for example, provide high-speed cable modem capabilities to interconnect one or more associated PCs with each other and with the remainder of the broadband network 1, provide functionality to one or more <u>TVs</u> (using, for example, either an integrated or separate decoder functionality, for example, set top box 350), one or more telephone connections such as plain old telephone service (POTS) phones and/or digital telephones, displays, wireless interfaces, voice processing, remote control interface, display interface, and/or administrative functions (Kung at column 19, lines 9-19).

Kung arguably teaches that although the illustration of a display, display drivers, and touch screen logic device 338 suggests that the a display is integral to the broadband residential gateway 300, alternative embodiments of the broadband residential gateway 300 may provide a user interface via the <u>TV screen</u>, PC screen, video telephone, and/or other display device in

8

addition to, or in lieu of, a display integral to the broadband residential gateway 300 (Kung at column 20, lines 60-67).

Kung arguably teaches that the external/internal Intercom Module (IM) 344 may include one or more <u>microphones/speakers</u>, voice CODECs, telephony processors, and/or interface ports (Kung at column 21, lines 14-16).

Kung arguably teaches that other customer premise equipment 102 devices such as one or more televisions (TV) 106, personal computers (PC) 108, and telephones 110, etc., may be connected to the broadband residential gateway 300 via various ports as discussed above (Kung at Figure 4, column 25, lines 1-5).

Kung arguably teaches that the called party is alerted via distinctive ringing or other alerting means that a chasing call is for them and/or advised via their remote control or wireless alerter if the unit is equipped with a display, <u>or</u> a <u>speaker</u> at the pool or other terminal at the pool that the called party should take the multimedia call at their personal computer in their office (Kung at column 37, lines 56-61).

Nevertheless, Kung fails to disclose, teach or suggest software program application that includes means for notifying the user through the use of a tone generated <u>through the</u> <u>television speaker</u>.

Claim 19 has been canceled within the Amendment After Final Action (37 C.F.R. Section 1.116) of October 20, 2005.

<u>Claim 20</u> is drawn to an e-mail filtering and notification apparatus, comprising: set top box, connected between a TV content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a TV;

user-input means for allowing a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon;

retaining and storing means for retaining and storing said criteria and said notification icon;

querying means, for querying said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said user criteria has arrived at said e-mail server; and

notification means for notifying the user of said arrival by posting said notification icon to the Set Top Box,

wherein said notification icon relates to the subject matter of said arriving e-mail.

At least for the reasons provided hereinabove with respect to claim 1, Kung fails to disclose, teach or suggest all claimed features.

Claim 21 is drawn to a computer readable medium comprising:

a software program application that enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and said notification icon;

a querying module that queries said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria has arrived at said e-mail server; and

a notifying module wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said criteria, said software program application notifies the user by posting said notification icon to the set top box.

At least for the reasons provided hereinabove with respect to claim 1, Kung fails to disclose, teach or suggest all claimed features.

The Examiner erred in rejecting claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Kung in view of Skinner.

<u>Claim 5</u> - Within claim 5, said set top box contains a single-tasking Operating System and said software program application remains in memory as a Terminate and Stay Resident program and runs intermittently at user-configurable intervals.

This rejection is traversed at least for the reasons provided hereinabove with respect to claim 1 and at least for the following reasons.

The Final Office Action <u>admits</u> that Kung fails to disclose, teach or suggest a set top box that contains a single-tasking Operating System and said software program application remains in memory as a Terminate and Stay Resident program and runs intermittently at user-configurable intervals (Final Office Action at page 7).

<u>Skinner</u> - Skinner has been provided in the Final Office Action for the features that are deficient from within Kung.

Skinner arguably teaches a time and activity tracker with a hardware abstraction layer. Skinner arguably teaches the addition of the hardware abstraction layer 101 provides the capability of monitoring, i.e., detecting, activities of multiple types of input devices, such as remote controls for TV <u>set top boxes</u> (Skinner at column 8, lines 21-24).

However, Skinner fails to disclose, teach, or suggest that upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling the e-mail filter criteria, a software program application notifies the user by posting the notification icon to a set top box.

At least for the reasons provided hereinabove with respect to claim 1, Kung and Skinner, either individually or as a whole, fails to disclose, teach or suggest all claimed features.

Conclusion

The claims are considered allowable for the same reasons discussed above, as well as for the additional features they recite.

Reversal of the Examiner's decision is respectfully requested.

The claims are considered allowable for the same reasons discussed above, as well as for the additional features they recite.

Reversal of the Examiner's decision is respectfully requested.

Dated: February 13, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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Registration No.: 24,104

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CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. (Previously presented) An apparatus for filtering electronic mail and notifying a user, residing in a set top box connected between a television content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a television, comprising:

a software program application which enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and said notification icon;

a querying module contained within said software program application which queries said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria has arrived at said e-mail server; and

a notifying module also contained within said software program application,

wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria, said software program application notifies the user by posting said notification icon to the set top box.

2. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

the connection between said set top box and said e-mail server is permanent, so that said software program application continually queries said e-mail server.

3. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

the connection between said set top box and said e-mail server is non-permanent, so that said software program application queries said e-mail server at specific timed intervals.

4. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said set top box contains a multi-tasking Operating System and said software program application runs on top of said Operating System.

5. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said set top box contains a single-tasking Operating System and said software program application remains in memory as a Terminate and Stay Resident program and runs intermittently at user-configurable intervals.

6. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application further includes means for notifying the user of the existence of e-mail messages fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria through said notification icon on the television screen.

7. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein

said notification icon is configurable by the user, and reflects the content of the email filter criteria.

8. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application further includes means for notifying the user through the use of a tone generated through the television speaker.

9. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 8, wherein

said tone is configurable by the user, and reflects the content of the e-mail filter criteria.

10. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein

said notifying means notifies the user of a plurality of said e-mail messages wherein each e-mail message satisfies different filter criteria and has a different user notification icon.

11. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application further includes means for querying said e-mail server upon power-up of said set top box, and immediately notifies the user of the existence of any e-mail messages satisfying the user-specified e-mail filter criteria.

12. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application notifies the user via a pager rather than through said set top box.

13. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application notifies the user of the existence of a telephone call with Caller ID satisfying said e-mail filter criteria, instead of an e-mail message.

14. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application notifies the user of another user attempting to make Instant Message contact with the user.

15. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

newer versions of said software program application are downloaded to said set top box by said Internet provider.

16. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 15, wherein

said downloading of newer versions can distinguish between different types of set top boxes, and make adjustments to the content of said download accordingly.

17. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application is not resident on said set top box, but is resident on said e-mail server.

18. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said set top box is connected to said e-mail server through a middle server, where said software program application is resident on said middle server.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously presented) An e-mail filtering and notification apparatus, comprising:

set top box, connected between a TV content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a TV;

user-input means for allowing a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon;

retaining and storing means for retaining and storing said criteria and said notification icon;

querying means, for querying said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said user criteria has arrived at said e-mail server; and

notification means for notifying the user of said arrival by posting said notification icon to the Set Top Box,

wherein said notification icon relates to the subject matter of said arriving e-mail.

21. (Previously presented) A computer readable medium for filtering electronic mail and notifying a user, residing on a set top box connected between a television content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a television, comprising:

a software program application that enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and said notification icon;

a querying module that queries said e-mail server to determine whether e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria has arrived at said e-mail server; and

a notifying module wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said criteria, said software program application notifies the user by posting said notification icon to the set top box.

EVIDENCE APPENDIX

There is no other evidence which will directly affect or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this appeal.

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

There are no other appeals or interferences which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this appeal.



TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF

Docket No. SOA-330

			50A-330					
In re Application of:								
Application No.	Filing Date	Examiner	Group Art Unit					
09/827,950-Conf. #6685	April 9, 2001	K. O. T. Bui	2611					
	paratus For Notifying Users Of	Filtered E-Mail Using A	Set Top Box					
	TO THE COMMISSIONER OF	F PATENTS:						
Transmitted herewith is the A	Appeal Brief in this application, w 	vith respect to the Noti	ce of Appeal					
The fee for filing this Appeal	Brief is \$500.00							
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A petition for extension	of time is also enclosed.							
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Effective on 12/0	2/2004			Complete if Known								
Fees pursuant to the Consolidated Appro		ct, 2005 (H.F	R. 4818).	Application Num	nber (09/827,950-C	onf. #6685					
FEE TRANSMITTAL			Filing Date		April 9, 2001							
			First Named Inv	entor I	Masahiro Nakano							
For FY 2005			Examiner Name K. O. T. Bui									
Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27				Art Unit 2611								
TOTAL AMOUNT OF PAYMENT	(\$)	500.00		Attorney Docket	No.	SOA-330						
METHOD OF PAYMENT (check all that apply)												
Check Credit Card Money Order None Other (please identify):												
X Deposit Account Deposit Account Number: 18-0013 Deposit Account Name: Rader, Fishman & Grauer PLLC												
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1. BASIC FILING, SEARCH, AND	XAMINA	TION FEI	ES									
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2. EXCESS CLAIM FEES							Fee (\$)	Fee (\$)				
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3. APPLICATION SIZE FEE			_	, , , ,	. 11 61	ī. •						
If the specification and drawings exceed 100 sheets of paper (excluding electronically filed sequence or computer listings under 37 CFR 1.52(e)), the application size fee due is \$250 (\$125 for small entity) for each additional 50 sheets or fraction thereof. See 35 U.S.C. 41(a)(1)(G) and 37 CFR 1.16(s).												
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Signature // /	T	/	/	Registration No. (Attorney/Agent)	24,104	Telephone	(202) 955-	-3750				
Name (Print/Type) Ronald P. Kanai	nen	/				Date	February 13	3, 2006				